



United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Washington, D.C. 20240

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In Reply Refer to:
FWS/OLE

Memorandum

To: Service Directorate

From: Director *Steve Williams*

Subject: Law Enforcement Priorities and Manatee Protection Measures

The priorities for law enforcement investigative activity are outlined in the Fish and Wildlife Service Manual. Under the general provisions of 444 FW 3, recent efforts to protect endangered manatees in Florida have been given a high priority in Region 4. Significant Federal resources have been deployed to reduce the number of manatee deaths related to watercraft strikes. Unfortunately, manatee injuries and mortalities continue to increase and pose a threat to overall recovery efforts.

The Office of Law Enforcement has been directed to significantly increase the resources dedicated to manatee protection in Florida. A special agent has been designated to coordinate the Service's task force operations with other Federal and State agencies. During the upcoming year, 20 task force operations will be conducted on high-use weekends. There will also be 30 mid-week task force operations scheduled for high priority manatee areas throughout the State. Marine surveillance cameras, radios, boats, vehicles and other equipment items will be made available to support this effort. Special Agents will be brought in from all Regions to staff the task forces and coordinate enforcement activities with refuge officers, the Coast Guard and officers from the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission.

Allocation of resources to particular manatee enforcement efforts will be determined by the task force coordinator in consultation with the appropriate field supervisor and program managers. Highest priority will be given to those enforcement actions and activities that are most likely to have a successful outcome and support the Service's broader manatee conservation efforts. Quarterly reports appropriate for release as public documents will be submitted to record the manatee enforcement efforts in Florida.

The Service has an excellent track record of providing enhanced law enforcement protection to support endangered species recovery efforts. Disruption to Regional operations will be minimal and every effort will be made to limit the staffing, equipment and other resources diverted from LE field stations during the coming months. Questions or concerns should be directed to Kevin Adams in the Office of Law Enforcement.